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Winter in Canada

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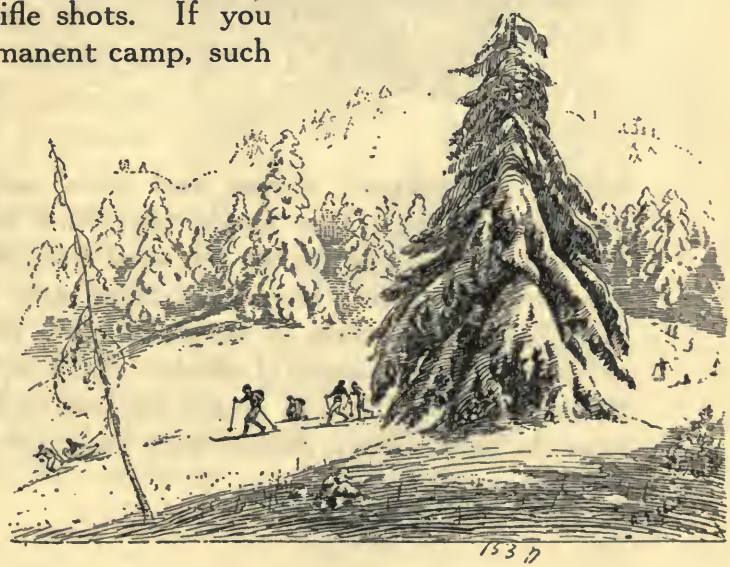
WINTER IN CANADA

"The stars that singly, then in flocks appear,
Like jets of silver from the violet dome,
So wonderful, so many and so near,
And then the golden moon to light me home;
The crunching snowshoes and the stinging air,
And silence, frost and beauty everywhere."
—*Lampman.*

THERE are distinctive charms in the Canadian winter. In its dry air, charged with life-giving oxygen, one feels exhilarated as never in warmer latitudes and one scarcely realizes how many degrees of frost may exist at the time. The prevailing vivacity affects the spirit and one is tempted to venture upon the heroic, regardless of fatigue and weather.

The beauty of winter in Canada is best appreciated by those who travel into the wilds of nature beyond the sight and sound of human activities. The silence of such places in summer is often profound but the silence of winter is still greater for the leaves have fallen and the birds have gone. There is no sound save the song of the pine and occasionally the deep booming of ice upon the lake cracking under the frost or the sharp snapping of trees like rifle shots. If you have a permanent camp, such as a log cabin, you may be visited by the few birds who inhabit the northernwoods in winter, the "whiskey-jack" and



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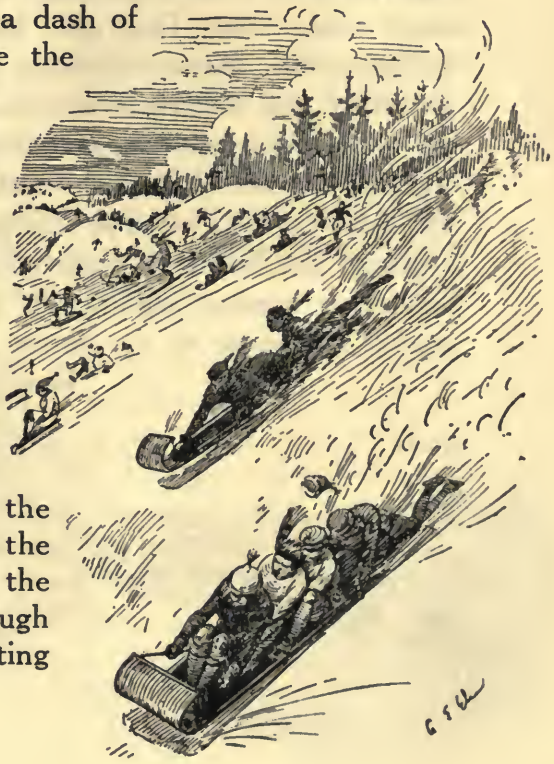
the snow-bunting, and you will have opportunities to study the habits of the animals. Along the margins of the frozen lakes and on the forest trails may be seen their tracks and sometimes evidence of tragedy recorded in the snow, and occasionally a deer where the snow is not too deep.

There are few sights more beautiful than the forest after freshly fallen snow not yet disturbed by the breeze. Great hoods and mantles of white lie upon the rocks and

bushes in fantastic shapes and little cedars become majestic domes. This magic fairy-land may last for days in sheltered nooks for the wind does not penetrate the forest depths. They who have seen the "silver-thaw" or an ice storm in the forest have witnessed one of nature's most beautiful effects. Each little twig and branchlet is sheathed in glassy ice and under the sun's rays the whole tree is decked with many coloured sparkling diamonds.

A strangely beautiful sight is sometimes seen in the early mornings before the sun's warmth is felt, when the night mist has frozen upon every limb and completely enveloped the entire tree in snowy whiteness, not as with falling snow from above but equally above, below and on all sides—a truly magic sight. Vapour, suspended in the air, too light to fall, will be seen in the early morning light as myriads of dancing, flashing particles of floating ice. This effect can be seen only in northern latitudes where the air is dry and frosty.

In summer one thinks of nature as clothed in beautiful colours. In winter the snow-covered fields, forest and lakes seem to be shrouded in a great sheet of white. But to those appreciative of colours winter reveals a world of wonderful beauty never seen in summer. As the low-lying sun slowly declines and day begins to wane, the lengthening shadows on the snow appear as of deepest cobalt blue shading into violet. The setting sun here and there paints a dash of rose and orange, while the dusky pines, spruces and cedars stand out in emphatic blackness against the white, and the gray trunks of beeches and maples are all painted in sunset hues.



The gorgeous beauty of the winter sunsets in Canada is well known. Mists do not hang in the evening sky to obscure the brilliant colours, but the sun's rays shine through the purest ether, painting

the clouds in wondrous hue and reflecting their lustre upon the snow. Sometimes may be seen that strange, green, after-glow in the sunsets as though one were gazing into crystal, and the clear skies at night are studded with innumerable stars and the brilliant constellations of winter.

Low down in the north lies Charles's Wain with its pointers; in mid-heaven the Charioteer and Taurus with the Pleiades; and in the south, the Great Dog with his brilliant gem Sirius following Orion of gorgeous belt. Beautiful and wonderful are the auroras of summer but far more impressive in extent and colouring are the flashing northern lights of winter in Canada brightening the snow-covered earth in strange tremulous gleam. To traverse the forest in moonlight, to see its mysterious splendour casting shadows of dense blackness on the snowy whiteness of the forest path, is an experience long to be remembered. The wonders of the heavens in their brilliance may best be seen in a Canadian winter sky.

One observes the absence of atmospheric

moisture in Canada, as compared with more southerly latitudes, and of high winds during days of intense cold. On a typical Canadian winter day the sun shines continuously in great brilliance from a cloudless sky, while the smoke from chimney-tops may be seen ascending in long perpendicular columns.

The tropics may attract some who prefer the enervating luxury of genial warmth in winter, where exercise and effort soon fatigue, but the city-dweller who seeks to be reinvigorated, to experience the spring and snap of youth and to absorb new life for future effort, will turn to the snow-clad hills and valleys of Canada and breathe its exquisite winter air.

It is said that some have received a wrong impression of the severity of the Canadian winter and fear to expose themselves, never having actually tried it, but without the experience they cannot realize the wonderfully beneficial effect of Canada's sunshine and open air, especially in the interior. It is a great surprise to the dweller in a humid climate to discover upon his first experience of a Canadian winter that the below-zero temperatures are not only bearable but may be actually pleasant. With its plentiful supply of ultra-violet light, passing unimpeded through the pure, dry air, the sunshine acts most beneficially on health, for, generally speaking, there is a marked absence in Canadian atmosphere of fogs and excessive humidity which make the cold of winter so unbearable in some countries.

The tourist going for the first time to the Canadian forests and lakeland in midwinter discovers that heavy coats and furs are an encumbrance when exercising in the mid-day sun. The still frosty air in brilliant sunshine does not chill, even though the thermometer should record many degrees of frost. It is uncomfortably cold only when a breeze prevails. The visitor to Canada in midwinter need not fear the cold provided he remains much in the open air and is suitably clad. Winter sports offer attractions to the visitor, but not the least

of Canada's attractions is the important advantage of a fine winter climate, healthful and invigorating.

Some come to Canada in winter to pass as much time as is possible outdoors, participating in winter sports, travelling through the country, traversing the frozen lakes and snow-covered forests, enjoying the beauty of winter scenery contrasted with the colouring of summer. These are the students of nature, lovers of the open country, to whom the sight of snow-clad forests and frozen lakes is always pleasant. They love to study

the varying aspects of nature, the winter habits of animals and birds, and to absorb fresh life from the exhilarating atmosphere. Others prefer the comforts of well-heated hotels and venture abroad chiefly to enjoy winter sports in the immediate vicinity. It is not necessary to travel long distances from one's hotel to find suitable conditions for skiing, snowshoeing, and skating, for in Canada natural conditions of forest, lake and open country exist near the cities.

Skating has never lost its ancient attraction. Open-air public skating rinks are to be seen in nearly every town and city in Canada, as well as closed rinks often heated to some degree and equipped with artificial ice. Skating carnivals are held every season in which may be seen the most graceful, attractive figure-skating by champions of the world. Frequent snowfalls in eastern Canada prevent long distance skating on the lakes and rivers, excepting for brief periods after freezing, but it is customary in some places to keep the ice clear of snow for open-air rinks.

Hockey, which has now become a professional game, is a favourite not only with Canadians but with visitors who come from long distances to witness exciting matches between rival teams. It is singularly attractive because of the almost incredible speed and wonderful agility shown by the Canadian players

who are famous far and wide. Important matches are held in all the chief cities and the large attendance at every match game bespeaks the popular interest.

But ski-running is now the great popular winter sport in which all alike may indulge. On fair days, even when the cold is intense, thousands of young men and women will be seen leaving the towns in gay coloured garments carrying their skis for a hike in the hill country. Probably no more pleasant and beneficial winter sport than ski-running was ever devised. The art is easily learned and requires no greater expenditure of effort than one's strength permits. It is wholly free from danger unless the novice seeks to emulate exploits of the old-timer before being qualified by proper experience. It is a sport for which all are eligible and is inexpensive after the first necessary equipment has been obtained. And what is more exhilarating than a long hike to one of the club-lodges and the return in afternoon shadows or perhaps by moonlight?

Not only does skiing bring health through most enjoyable exercise in the open combined with gentle thrills of unexpected happenings and in the company of friends, but it affords opportunity of visiting parts of the country practically inaccessible at other times. Above the snow-covered obstructions of rocks and

hillocks one may course through the open woods and over the hills where no roads exist, free as a bird. The trail may lead one afar over open fields, or by an old woodman's path through the bush to some mystic lake hidden deep in the forest or to a pretty waterfall adorned with ice and snow, and one may enjoy the excitement of gliding down a hill not without suspicion of danger. Skiing may be as simple or as elaborate as one's ambition and experience dictate, from plain coursing over the level snow to jumping from hilltops, for the art is progressively learned and appeals to the spirit of adventure. Trails are frequently marked by local ski-clubs showing direction, distances, and dangerous descents, and places of refreshment are maintained where one may rest awhile and profit by a warm meal. The visiting tourist who fancies skiing will find a hearty welcome extended by local ski-clubs all over Canada, who will provide guides for a stranger.

Ski-jumping may be classed among spectacular sports. Sometimes suitable localities are found among the hills of eastern Canada and the mountains of British Columbia and in some places lofty towers and slides have been erected on the edge of steep hills or cliffs where ski-

jumping by expert skiers may be witnessed. The novice is not likely to risk life or limb on these slides, but he will find plenty of opportunity for safe jumping on his trips.

Snow-shoeing, that ancient custom of Indian origin, though largely supplanted as a means of sport by skiing, is still the choice of many and numerous snow-shoe clubs exist in the cities of Canada. While the ski as a means of snow-travel is especially adapted to open hill country, there are occasions and places when the snow-shoe alone is used, as in traversing the forest and thick bush on deep, freshly fallen snow. It still remains to the Indian, the trapper, and courier, the most satisfactory means for travel in deep snow. From Alaska to Labrador, wherever the dog-team is used, there will be seen the snow-shoe. Its convenient size, of whatever pattern, permits its use where the length of the ski is prohibitive. In general, one may go anywhere on snow-shoes, over the fields and heavy drifts and through the dense bush. Snow-shoeing practically exercises every muscle and produces that reward of exhilaration which comes from deep breathing of the pure forest air. Greater speed may be had by using the ski on suitable trails and yet the speed acquired by the Indians and those accustomed to the use of snow-shoes is remarkable.

Before the introduction of railways, travelling by dog-teams in the west and in outlying districts of the east was the universal custom, and is still the only means of winter transportation in the far north where roads do not exist. It can hardly be classed among the customary winter sports of the east which attract the tourist, but will appeal to those who wish to see something of the pioneer's life. It is not generally known that parties of sportsmen to-day travel long distances from the United States to visit the forests and lakelands of Canada in midwinter. Accompanied by Indian guides and travelling by dog-teams they penetrate into wild solitudes which are practically inaccessible in summer. It is the love of adventure and the beauty of the wilderness in winter that attract.

Tobogganning is a winter sport still maintained throughout Canada. The slides are specially constructed of ice sides and are easily kept in order and, where the natural configuration of the land permits, are often of considerable length. The sport is limited in character as compared with the freedom of skiing, but the excitement of the light-

ning-descent is ample compensation for the long uphill return, and, then, one is exercising in the fresh air, in the midst of gayety and merriment. It is not a sport that need fatigue and the slide is generally not far from one's hotel.

Curling, as might be expected, is a winter sport found all over Canada. Nearly every town has its curling rink and devotees of the game, especially throughout the west, for the Canadian winter is favourable to the game. The sport is practically confined to membership in curling clubs, but matches between celebrated clubs appeal to those interested in the game.

Canada has much to offer to the seeker after health or pleasure during winter. The great open is wellnigh boundless and the essentials for personal comfort are easily obtainable. Conveniences for winter sports exist in all the chief cities of Canada and one may enjoy tobogganning, skiing, skating and other sports within a short distance of the hotel.

ERNEST VOORHIS.

Enquiries regarding the natural resources and attractions of Canada, both in summer and winter, will receive attention if directed to the Natural Resources Intelligence Service, Department of the Interior, Ottawa.

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